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An all-male Bach Passion—quite a shock at first

jacob siskind
classical recordings

It isn't very often that musicologists come up with something shocking even in this day and age, but Nikolaus Harnoncourt and his Concentus Musicus Wien have come up with a really extraordinary approach to the music of Bach that will shatter a great many illusions. His ideas can be heard in his new recording of the St. Matthew Passion which features Max van Egmond as the first bass soloist (van Egmond was recitalist at the Ladies' Morning Musical Club earlier this week).

It is Harnoncourt's contention that if one is to play the music of Bach with instruments of the period, and he does, then it is also imperative that the vocal resources employed be very similar in timbre to that found in the orchestra. To that end, his performances use no female voices whatever, either as soloists or in the choruses.

This performance has the men's voices of the King's College Choir, Cambridge, the boys of the Regensburger Choir, and as soprano soloists it employs the anonymous voices of members of the Vienna Boys' Choir. The alto solos are sung by countertenors, or male altos.

The effect is staggering at first. If you are accustomed to hearing the lush sound of a Maureen Forrester in the contralto arias it is quite a shock to hear a male alto address himself to Erbarme Dich; or to hear child-like piping to the words of Blute Nur, Du Liebes Herz.

The most interesting thing is that the sounds of neither have the white quality one usually associates with male sopranos, and so I wonder just how much closer to the sound of a baroque flute or oboe these singers are than a traditional performance.

It is true that Handel, who was a contemporary of Bach, made extensive use of castrati, both altos and sopranos, in his operas in London, but this is the first time that I have come across the suggestion that this kind of voice was usual in the music of Bach too. Certainly the effect is one to cause wonderment.

The performance, once you have gotten over the initial shock of hearing the familiar in an unfamiliar setting, is beautifully transparent and sensitively paced. The recording as such is excellent (Das Alte Werk SAWT 9572-5).

MORE KOREAN VIOLIN PLAYING

A few weeks go we heard a young Korean violinist, Young Uck Kim, as soloist with the Montreal Symphony. Now another Galamian pupil from Korea is in the news. Kyung-Wha Chung is one of those wonder children who learned to play the violin at an early age. She handles her instrument as though born with it under her chin.

She has just been recorded with the London Symphony under Andre Previn in the Sibelius and Tschaikowsky Violin Concerti. The record (London CS 6710) gets each concerto on one side so the album sets some kind of a record for music on one disc — more than 65 minutes. You get your money's worth, time-wise, alright, but if you want more than a clear traversal of all the notes you will have to look elsewhere. Miss Chung is an expert fiddler, but so far she doesn't seem to have anything interesting to say.

ARTHUR GRUMIAUX

For quick contrast, pick up the recent release featuring Arthur Grumiaux playing the Lalo Symphonie Espagnol and the Saint-Saens Havanaise and Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso. Grumiaux may not be the flashiest violinist around and he lacks the push and gall of a Szeryng, but he makes these performances glow far more warmly, yet tastefully, than anything I have ever heard from Szeryng. Indeed, these are the best versions of these pieces currently available (World Series PHC 9140). Pity the recording of the Lalo by Ida Haendel, with the Czech Philharmonic under Karl Ancerl, is not generally distributed in this area. That was a real winner!

YOUNG PIANISTS

Two young pianists are also represented in the recent releases. John Lill of Britain won the 1970 Tschaikowsky competition in Moscow. DGG wasted no time in getting him into their studios to record a Brahms album containing the two books of Variations on a Theme by Paganini and the Klavierstucke, Op. 76. Lill is best in the Variations which are more virtuoso oriented. He storms through the pieces without displacing a hair. The other pieces are far too intimate for his kind of playing at this time (DGG 2530-059). The recording is close to excellent.

Jean-Rodolphe Kars, who was a pupil of the late Julius Katchen, has two unfamiliar works back to back on his latest release. These are the Delius Concerto in c minor and the Debussy Fantaisie for Piano and Orchestra. Neither work is very important and neither had a recent Lp version of any consequence in the current catalogues. If you want to hear these pieces it will be a long time before you get a better recorded performance of either (London CS 6657).

POP MUSIC

Around and about town...

Delaney and Bonnie: Good-time rock 'n' roll at PdA tomorrow.

By HERBERT ARONOFF
Written for The Gazette

HOT PANTS . . . that's my new title for all the news that I'm fit to print herein. (Also the recipient of my personal award as Great Gimnick of the Seventies — those next-to-nothing f e m a l e coverings leave a lot to be desired.)

First heavy breathings go to **Miss Vickie** at CFCF who wore hers in pink to the press conference for **Engelbert Humperdinck** . . . a cast-iron fly to them all at the Hotel Sonesta for the most up-tight hype-bash in a long while.

And, speaking of **The Hump** . . . his show at the Forum drew 15,000 or so — most of them ladies and most of **them** wearing a bright red hue . . . have checked with **Vance Packard** of **H i d d e n Persuaders** and it seems they all secretly desire that "fallen woman" image — red-hot mamas and all that, you know.

Talk about hot pants . . . **Juan "Star" Rodriguez** wears many hats — fulltime hockey fan, sometime rock critic, persistent magazine editor . . . as well as winning this past week's Big Bummer award for his review of **Edgar Winter**, he also found time to resurrect **Pop-see-cul** f o r e-runner of the recently-defunct **Hard Core** . . . the new one looks better than ever.

Edgar Winter, by the way, was feeling low the day after his show at the **Capitol** — nothing to do with the concert, which was super, just a touch of the real-live blues.

Were you there at the Capitol? **White Trash**, Edgar's six-man band, is fronted by an old friend of his with the for-real name of **Jerry LaCroix** . . . 'cept he wasn't raised in Louisiana but in Texas near Port Arthur w h e r e **Janis** sprang from.

Jerry and Edgar knocked around the booze halls down that way for a few years playing the same romping music they do now ("Is there any other kind?" asks Jerry) . . . then Jerry worked with his own guys in groups like the **Boogie Kings** and **Jackson Brewin' Company.** He used to want to play sax just like Coltrane . . . now he's happy blowing his guts out-singing his lungs out doing what he always did . . . and with his wife and kids along on the trip, it's bound to be beautiful travelling from here on in.

As well as **Place Laurier** for live weekend sounds, a bunch of guys are taking over **Sir George Williams'** cafeteria on Saturday nights for a $2-a-head dance hall . . . tonight there's **Rabble, Gap** and **I Am You** plus booze if you can stand it . . . if things go well, Sir George's Seventh Floor Saturday Nights could become a habit.

Sunday n i g h t (that's tomorrow), **Delaney & Bonnie** and Friends bust into **Place des Arts** for two shows . . . and **John Hammond** is also along for the ride.

Maybe you saw ol' **D & B on the CBC's Rock Two** awhile back . . . they're the southern folks who put together all that talent that later became **Joe Cocker's** Mad Dogs . . . it'll be good to hear a little good time rock 'n' roll in the old culture palace one more time.

COMING UP DEPT. Some things to watch out for in the days, weeks etc. ahead . . . **Melanie** making up her cancelled date from a few months back — **DKD's** got her booked for March: at **PDA**. . . rumors about **Isaac Hayes** playing the culture dome may start to fly . . . **Alfie & Friends** eyeing **Casa Loma** en has for big beat HQ . . . also watch out for **Spring**—in case you forgot, that's not a group but a time of year when the **Sun** shines and it's **Warm** . . . and then, too, there's talk about a lot of free concerts on the mountain when the snow melts . . . keep on truckin'.

On the radio airwaves this weekend

TODAY

1.10 p.m. (CBM-AM) Sound of Britain. Sam Pollock's Newsletter from London, a visit to London's West Brompton with Halvor Olsson, and Music on the Heather with Anne Robertson.

1.10 p.m. (CBM-FM) Great Singers. Richard Tucker who is observing his 25th Anniversary with the Metropolitan Opera.

2.00 p.m. (CBM-AM, CBF-AM, -FM) Metropolitan Opera. Live from New York, Elektra by Richard Strauss, with Birgit Nilsson, Leonie Rysanik, Jean Madeira, Robert Nagy, Thomas Stewart, and Karol Boehm conducting.

5.00 p.m. (CKVL-FM) Make Believe Ballroom. Four hours of great dance music with G u y Lombardo, Lawrence Welk and some of the best of the big bands. (Followed at **9 p.m.** by **Le Chapelet en Famille**)

7.03 p.m. (CBM-AM) Variety Pak. Chicho Valle and his Latin Rhythms.

8.30 p.m. (CBM-AM) Pratley at the Movies. Is Vancouver becoming a Hollywood-like hive of film making activity? Gerald Pratley reports.

9.03 p.m. (CBM-AM) Stage. Fahrenheit 451, by Ray Bradbury, adapted in two parts by Otto Lowy. Bradbury's best seller that became a movie, telling of a future time when all books might be banned. Cast includes Neil Dainard, Sharon Kirk and Linda Sorenson.

9.15 p.m. (CKVL-FM) Saturday Night Dance Party. Toe-tapping rhythms until 4 a.m.

11.05 p.m. (CBF-AM) Jazz en Liberte. From the Hermitage, the Russell Thomas Quintet.

SUNDAY

12.07 a.m. (CBM-FM) Jazz at its Best. Part two of the series featuring C o l e m a n Hawkins, one of the greatest tenor sax players in the jazz world, with Henry Whiston.

2.00 a.m. (CFQR) Sound Stage. Sacred Classics. Works by Byrd, Haydn, Morales, Victoria, D u f a y, Anerio, Wright, Penalosa, Wesley and Handel.

7.00 a.m. (CKVL-FM) Music from Ireland. Norrie Paramor conducts the Dublin Light Orchestra and Dennis Day sings Irish songs.

8.10 a.m. (C K V L - A M) Names in the News. Larry Fredericks talks to Tom Carille, Associate Producer of the film Waterloo, and to Montrealer Mimi Randolph, the Broadway star who will be playing in Awake and Sing, at the Saidye Bronfman Centre, beginning Wednesday.

8.15 a.m. (CBM-AM) Voice of t h e Pioneer. Dorothea Mitchell, a 94-year-old resident of Victoria reminisces about her many occupations which include owning a saw-mill and operating a general store.

9.05 a.m. (CBF-AM) Orchestra Canadien. Until noon, music by the Winnipeg Symphony, the CBC Orchestra and the Baroque Group of Montreal.

9.30 a.m. (CKVL-FM) Music from Europe. Musical variety from Germany, Switzerland, the Danube and other areas, until 3 p.m.

1.03 p.m. (CBM-AM) Funny You Should Say That: Arte Johnson, that "Verrry interesting" fellow from Laugh In joins Joan Stuart, Barrie Baldaro, Peter Cullen and Ted Zeigler for a zany comedy program with Tony Chappell's Orchestra.

2.00 p.m. (CBF-FM) Musique Canadienne. Works by P a p i n e au-Couture, Morel, Hetu and Garant, with Fernande Chiocchio, Serge Garant and Guy Lachapelle.

2.03 p.m. (CBM-AM) NHL Hockey. Toronto at Boston.

5.10 p.m. (CBM-AM) Cross Country Checkup. The Fish Industry—A Dying Industry in Canada? Gus Etchegary, vice-president of Fishery Products Ltd., is the guest.

7.00 p.m. (CBM-FM) Opera Theatre. W a g n e r 's Gotterdammerung, with B i r g i t Nilsson, W o l f g a n g Windgassen, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau and Christa Ludwig.

7.03 p.m. (CBM-AM) The Entertainers. P r o g r a m includes the Lance Harrison Dixieland Band from Vancouver, and the Barry's Bay Winter Carnival Show, with Debbie Lori Kaye, champion fiddler Graham Townsend and the Pat Riccio Band.

9.15 p.m. (CKVL-FM) Tonight at the Opera. Leoncavallo's I Pagliacci, with Carla Gavazzi, Carlo Bergonzi and Marcello Rossi, and Alfredo Simonetto conducting the Turin IRTO; Puccini's Suor Angelica, with Renata Tebaldi, Giulietta Simionato, and the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino conducted by Lamberto Gardelli.

10.30 p.m. CBM-AM) Studio 7. Raven, Creator of the World. Eskimo legends retold by Ronald Melzack.

12.07 a.m. (CBM-AM) Armchair Traveller. Montreal photographer-writer Ian Black talks about the thrills of skiing in Montana and Colorado.

12.30 a.m. (CFQR) Sound Stage. O p e r a and Ballet. Works by Donizetti, John A n till, Ginastera, Richard Strauss, Adam and Roussel.

MSO rehearsal to be open

Contributors to the Montreal Symphony Orchestra during the current season are being invited to a "b e h i n d - t h e - scenes" view of a rehearsal on Tuesday March 30 at 11 a.m. at Place des Arts.

The open rehearsal is for the concerts of March 30 and 31. Music Director Franz-Paul Decker will conduct the Orchestra in Schumann's Symphony No. 1, R e s p i g h i 's "Feste Romane," and the Saint-Saens Piano Concerto No. 4. The soloist will be the renowned French pianist Philippe Entremont.

The rehearsal will begin at 11 a.m. sharp. Since this will be a working session, those attending the rehearsal are asked to be in their seats at least five minutes before it starts, the MSO said in a statement.

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